1:Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1954 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

kingdom under Sobhuza I and Mswati and the various Ngoni States. Despite their common social and cultural origin these emergent polities had each its distinctive features. The special characteristics of Ngoni society are at least in part understandable as due to the differences in its social environment as compared with Zulu and Swazi. The Ngoni were migrants, whereas Zulu and Swazi were not. The Ngoni captured a large number of men and women of non-Nguni origin who were assimilated into the Ngoni State as individuals, whereas for the most part the Zulu and Swazi States expanded by the incorporation of existing social groups as groups, not as individuals, and these groups, if not all Nguni in origin, at least belonged to closely allied peoples.

Thus to set the Ngoni in proper perspective we must begin with a brief description of their Nguni forebears. In the eighteenth century the Nguni were grouped into a large number of small chiefdoms each containing a dominant agnatic lineage segment to which the chief belonged. Each chiefdom contained segments of other lineages, and most lineages had segments in a number of chiefdoms, one segment being dominant in its chiefdom. Lineages were exogamous, their members were graded in terms of primogeniture and the ranking of wives, and as a result of quarrels segments transferred their allegiance from one chief to another or even founded new chiefdoms. Most residential settlements were small, containing only the agnatic descendants of a living man, with their wives and children, and were divided into three sections or 'houses', led by the great, right- and left-hand wives of the polygynous head of the settlement. There were also larger homesteads containing the dwellings of chiefs and other members of the dominant lineage as well as those of many genealogically unrelated dependants. The chief was assisted by his agnatic kinsmen and by the heads of non-chiefly lineage segments and by other unrelated men whom he placed as lieutenants, or indunas, in charge of districts or responsible for specific administrative, judicial or military tasks. For fighting and hunting the men of the chiefdom were organized in divisions, each attached to a royal homestead. There was also an organization of youths into small age-sets, groupings of coevals who had been circumcised together.

At the turn of the century, with the emergence of large kingdoms, each containing many chiefdoms under the leadership of a king, the age-set system changed its form and the royal homesteads acquired greater significance. Circumcision was discontinued and the age-sets began to be organized on a national basis. Each age-set constituted a regiment in the national army, had it barracks

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FR5 Ngoni FR5
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Tumbuka FR6

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leave after meeting, withdrawing after a case in court, and initiating or concluding many other formal or less formal occasions. Children were taught to use the correct expressions and rebuked if they made a mistake, and it was one of the requirements in Ngoni families that a uniform standard of verbal politeness should accompany correct behaviour in posture.

CULTURAL AFFINITIES AND DIFFERENCES

N M 121 122

The anthropologist working in Nyasaland is aware of the problems inherent in any attempt to isolate cultural features within any of the larger ethnic groups found there. There were no ethnographic field studies published of any of the other ethnic groups when I was working among the Ngoni. Mary Tew, in *Peoples of the Lake Nyasa Region*,[1] referred to scattered sources published before 1939, to which I had access; and from time to time Cewa informants wrote accounts of particular social institutions or ritual, from which I was able to make certain comparisons with Ngoni ritual and institutions. Some of the earlier accounts, such as that by Hodgson on the Cewa and Ngoni in the Dowa district,[2] assumed that all the cultural changes and 'borrowings' had been by the Ngoni from their Cewa neighbours, whereas I found in that area in 1939 Cewa villages where Ngoni cultural elements had been adopted.

N M 114 177

Ngoni cultural affinities with South-eastern Bantu	*Local tribal differences*
Paramount and subordinate chiefs	Chiefs; no central authority except in Henga and Ngonde
Patrilineal descent Virilocal residence Marriage by *lobola*	Cewa and southern Tumbuka: Matrilineal descent, uxorilocal residence, marriage witnesses Henga: Patrilineal descent and virilocal residence
Clan exogamy „ hierarchy Houses Age sets	Cewa: No clan exogamy „ „ hierarchy *Mlumba* group Girls' initiation schools
Cattle complex Ancestor cult associated with cattle	Tumbuka Cewa in Dedza district: Formerly cattle-owners but no terminology left and no association with ancestor cult
Burial customs: in skin near krsal	Cewa and Tumbuka: Graves outside village; buried in a mat

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[1] Tew, M., op. cit.
[2] Hodgson, A. G. O. 'Notes on the Achewa and Angoni of Dowa District, Nyasaland.' *J. Royal Anthropological Institute*, 1933, pp. 126–64.

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

a few weeks. They were both dominated by important Ngoni families, and both the headquarters of subordinate chiefs. They both represented that blend of old and new in Ngoni life which was continually keeping the anthropologist on her toes.

Enkodlweni was far from main roads and centres of modern life. When I first went there my lorry cut a swathe of grass knee-high on the so-called road to the village, and the radiator, choked with grass seed, boiled all the time. I lived in the mud-and-wattle hut maintained by the chief for visiting teachers and missionaries opposite the school, a four-standard school under an able young headmaster, well educated and well trained. He and his schoolboys, the resident evangelist and the court clerk represented the new elements in village life. Yet they were not cut off from the Ngoni way of life—on the contrary they were very much part of it and very proud of being Ngoni. The school had been taught in the Ngoni language, akin to old Zulu, until a few years before my visit, and the children were still given Ngoni proverbs to write in their copy-books. Several of the older people had books in their huts written in Zulu as well as in English, and Ngoni was still spoken as the home language in many of the households. The older women knew the traditional special vocabulary used by women only, and dressed their hair in the high chignon style. Proverbs were quoted often in the court and in church; stories of war against the Bemba people in Northern Rhodesia forty years ago were told by the kraal gate as if they happened last year. Several leading Ngoni clans were represented in the village, and each had their own praise songs and forms of addressing their ancestors.

The old evangelist, himself a member of a famous clan, had been threatened, thirty years before, with death by the former chief if he continued to teach and preach. He stayed, notwithstanding, and had become one of the trusted counsellors of the present chief. During the day he joined the

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

senior men who related to me historial events, family genealogies, war-songs and other Ngoni traditional knowledge, including the ideas and methods of bringing up Ngoni children. In the evenings the schoolboys gathered by my hut to practise their English, to discuss their school work and their plans for the future. The tsetse menace had for some time been threatening the cattle and losses were considerable. The boys wanted above all to emigrate and find work so that they could earn money to send home to their fathers to buy more cattle, pay taxes, buy clothes, guns and ammunition, for it was lion country.

Out of the thirty-one households in the village, twenty-five belonged to the men of Ngoni clans. There were nine elderly widows of Ngoni leading families, and of the younger women eighteen were true Ngoni. There was therefore both among the men and the women, and in the senior and younger age-groups, a high proportion of those who were true Ngoni and who practised the Ngoni way of living. It was a village where Ngoni cultural patterns were very much in evidence, and where the school and the church, representing modern developments, were closely integrated with village life.

Emcakateni was just off a main road and as easily accessible as Enkodlweni was remote. It was perched on a hill-top in a commanding position, and was much larger, with a hundred and twenty-two households compared with thirty-one. There were several kraals and many cattle, no tsetse menace, but lions in the neighbourhood which more than once attacked the kraal at night. Outsiders, that is of non-Ngoni clans, who had money, had married into the chief's and other leading families, and these households possessed well-built brick houses. I lived in a grass-and-pole hut inside a fence, near the compound of the big house. There was no school in the village, and the nearest one was run by a mission disliked by the leading Ngoni. The boys spent all their time with the cattle, or hunting or practising crafts.

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

There were musicians and craftsmen there, as at Enkodlweni. All the senior Ngoni men knew Ngoni history, used proverbs in the courts and in conversation, and two or three senior men knew and carried out the ritual of the ancestor cult. The new element in this village was due to economic influences rather than missionary and educational. Most of the men had learned to read and write Nyanja while away at work, but no one knew more than a few words of English, and only one or two of the leading men, and no women, spoke Ngoni.

The men of the leading Ngoni families formed a closely knit group for purposes of village affairs, social life and ritual performances. There was a group of senior Ngoni women who exerted a powerful influence in all matters concerned with household life and the bringing up of children. But out of a total of one hundred and twenty-one households, only thirty-seven belonged to men of Ngoni clans, and there were only thirty-two women of Ngoni clans including both the older and the younger groups of women. The aristocratic group here was small in comparison with Enkodlweni, but the influence of their ways of living was proportionately much stronger. The Ngoni men and women of leading families were very conscious of their cultural distinction and also of their relatively small numbers, and many were the complaints about 'those other people who are spoiling our land'.

Political and social changes

When the British took over the administration of Nyasaland between 1891 and 1901, the Ngoni kingdoms received no special recognition. Their chiefs, called by the administration principal village headmen, and their heads of clans called village headmen, were relegated to the same position *vis-à-vis* the administration as the local peoples. Part of the Central Ngoni kingdom was cut off from the rest by the treaty demarcating the Nyasaland boundary from Portuguese East Africa.

9: Read E-5 (1935) 1936 FR5 Ngoni FR5

We have also to recognize that the wider connotation of the word is in constant use to-day, and it will be apparent in the course of this article that those who like to be thought Ngoni but have no real claim to the name, find ways in which to identify themselves with the real Ngoni, and to impress upon outsiders that they share the distinction of that name.

III. NGONI SOCIETY AS A CULTURAL UNIT. It is evident that the field worker who tries to describe and analyse the society which is found in the Ngoni areas to-day has some difficulty in establishing appropriate and correct terms. Here is a society which is a compound of ethnic units, subdivided into clans according to kinship, stratified into ranks, held together by a ruling aristocracy and a strong centralized political organization. This society differs radically from that of a homogeneous community where the sociological structure has gone through a long process of integration or disintegration, or has remained static over a period of time. The Ngoni created their 'state', that is, their present political and social units, within a relatively short period by a series of deliberate acts. They brought with them a pattern of society from the south; they modified[1] it during their forty odd years of wandering and warfare; and they moulded it finally when they settled in their present areas. Within this deliberately created social structure the principles of centralization and rank were dominant. Based on these two principles the Ngoni set up, in an alien milieu, the institutions of chieftainship,[2] of military training, of systematized law courts, of recognized ranks in society, of patrilineal succession and inheritance, speaking among themselves a language foreign to the country. The resultant society, a compound of the Ngoni ruling aristocracy and the conquered indigenous people, formed the Ngoni state. So conscious was all this social engineering that old men to-day can give detailed accounts of the various processes, political, legal, military, by which the conquerors and conquered were brought under one rule.[3] Borrowing a term from European history,

[1] One striking modification was the replacing of the village as a small kinship group by villages of hundreds of huts, with an elaborate organization into hamlets.

[2] Using chieftainship in the sense of the Ngoni *inkosi* whose office and powers were very different from those of the surrounding petty chiefs.

[3] As one of these processes, the piercing of the ear-lobes became the 'tribal

9: Read E-5 (1935) 1936 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Maravi FR4

Ngoni understand and speak it. It is in fact one of the distinguishing marks between the true Ngoni and the rest. It is convenient for a chief to be able to exchange a few remarks with a relative or an important visitor in a language which the onlookers cannot follow, and I have also heard a chief do the same with one of his *indunas* during a case in court. When I played Zulu records on my gramophone the aristocrats and old warriors drew near to listen, while the nobodies who could not understand fell back naturally. It is interesting to see how this language test brings out the social distinctions based on family and rank, and produces generally an inferiority reaction among the non-Ngoni.

As other distinguishing institutions the Ngoni point out their dances[1] and songs; their former military organization with its related system of age grades; their political organization under the Paramount Chief with his hierarchy of *amakosana*, *abalumuzana*, *izinduna*, *amanxusa*, &c.; the system of courts, again a hierarchy, with the laws administered in them; their village organization which still preserves the division into *izigawa* or hamlets, characteristic of the very big Ngoni villages of old days; the Ngoni code of ethics, differing radically from the code of the neighbouring tribes, with its insistence on truth, chastity, and personal discipline; and their patrilineal descent in clans and inheritance of property. This last, superimposed upon the local matrilineal and matrilocal tribes, has created a variety of forms of marriage and inheritance which is almost the despair of the field worker. The Ngoni say proudly, 'We taught them to honour their sons' when pointing out how nephew succession has to a large extent given way before filial succession. The values inherent in certain Ngoni institutions have spread beyond their own areas, for one Chewa Paramount Chief told me he had for long admired the Ngoni system of filial succession and inheritance, and was now trying, in the teeth of much opposition, to introduce it into his country.

After I had been a little while among the Ngoni, and their chiefs and leading men had begun to realize my aim in field work, I was surprised by the help they gave me and the amount of co-operation they showed in my enquiries. Then one day an old *induna* revealed

[1] One Ngoni Paramount has prohibited any but Ngoni dances to be danced in his country.

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Identification

The tribe, together with the Mombera Ngoni of N Nyasaland, the Chiwere and Gomani Ngoni of S Nyasaland, and the Magwangara of Tanganyika, are remnants of Natal Nguni or "Zulu" who left Natal about 1820 to escape Shaka's rule, who added Thonga, Shona, and Swazi elements to their Zulu base as they migrated northward on a career of conquest and pillage, and who settled in their present location near Fort Jameson in Northern Rhodesia after returning from raids as far north as Lake Victoria (for further history see Starr report). In 1950 they numbered about 60,000 exclusive of 25,000 more in Nyasaland), living on an area of about 1,500 square miles. They have given up their former Nguni tongue and speak Nsenga, with whom they formerly lived and intermarried during two sojourns, although their present Maravi neighbors are Chewa rather than Nsenga.

Basic Economy

Primarily pastoral, with important subsidiary brand-tillage agriculture and communal hunting (importance unreported). Barnes (1951) says primarily agriculture with important animal husbandry. Maize is the staple crop, but bulrush and finger millet, peanuts, sorghum, tomatoes, and pumpkins are also grown. Cattle are numerous and important, most of the tribal territory being free from the tsetse fly. Other domestic animals include many goats, sheep, pigs, dogs and chickens. Fishing is practically absent but some hunting is done.

Sex Division of Labor

Herding is done by men (particularly boys). Men also hunt, clear land, and do some hoeing. The women do the bulk of the agriculture.

Property

The chief wealth is in cattle, which nominally belong to the paramount chief, although individual ownership is recognized today. Land is held feudally from chiefs; it cannot be sold but may be given away; usufruct rights are forfeited by departure from the community.

Inheritance of cattle is patrilineal, the bulk of a man's herd

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going to the ElSo by his chief wife. A woman's cattle are inherited by her brother's children.

Social Stratification

War captives are slaves. They belong in theory to the paramount chief but in practice are usually allocated by him to their captors or to important families. The children of slaves are apparently free. Nobles and commoners.

Marriage

A substantial bride-price in cattle (the Nguni lobolo) formerly prevailed, but is uncommon today in consequence of acculturation to the subjected Maravi. Matrilocal bride-service occurs to some extent.

General polygyny prevails, with a chief wife and separate huts for each wife. Sororal polygyny is permitted (and perhaps encouraged); it requires no bride-price. There is preferential levirate with HuYoBr.

Family

The polygynous family is the norm. The old Nguni division into right-hand and left-hand "houses" formerly prevailed, but has broken down.

Residence

Residence was originally patrilocal (with bride-price), and this custom is still maintained by important families, but many follow the Maravi rule of matrilocal residence, and neolocal residence occurs in cases where the husband attaches himself to a chief. Children may be sent to live with grandparents in another village after weaning; otherwise they sleep in their mother's hut until 8-9 years old, when they move to special boys' and girls' dormitories.

Kin Groups and Exogamy

Incest taboos are essentially bilateral, though marriage is permitted between cross-cousins. A man may not marry any own or classification Mo, Da, or Si.

Though the Ngoni originally had exogamous patri-sibs, these

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have long since disappeared in the Mpezeni group, who retain only the patrilineal descent of names without any associated exogamous rule.

The original Dakota type of social system of the Nguni has largely broken down under contact with subjugated and absorbed matrilineal Maravi.

Kinship Terminology

Bifurcate merging terminology for avuncular relatives, generation type for nepotic relatives.

Cousin terminology is of Iroquois type.

Settlement Pattern

Settled villages of from 6 to 120 cone-cylinder huts, with a population range of 15-300.

Community Organization

A village is presumably not a kin-community because of the variation in residence rules and the decline of sibs. The houses of a village are laid out in parallel rows, with cattle pens at the edge of the village, instead of in the usual circular arrangement. Villages are of 5 types: (1) the capital village; (2) chiefly villages, founded by each new chief on his accession; (3) regal villages, old royal villages; (4) commoner villages ruled by hereditary headmen; (5) cadet villages, governed by junior members of the royal lineage. There are age-regiments, presumably on the Nguni pattern.

Local Government

Each village has a headman, who is succeeded by his ElSo by his chief wife. Royal villages (those of first 3 types), however, lack headmen, being administered by lieutenants appointed by the paramount chief.

State

Prior to 1898, the Mpezeni were tightly organized politically under a single paramount chief or king; his territory was divided into 4-5 provinces, each with a royal village administered by a senior queen and her sons and by appointive lieutenants; under each province were 3-4 districts with officials in charge; under

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the latter were the local headmen. Conquered aliens were absorbed into this territorial system. Military regiments were formed at intervals of 4-5 years on a national basis. (For further data see Starr report).

Warfare

The tribe was organized primarily for offensive warfare and cattle stealing. In the 1870's and thereafter there were annual raiding expeditions during the dry season against the Bisa, Chewa, Chikunda, Ila, Lala, and Nsenga.

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